

The little piano that could

By Tabitha Wells

In a kind of, sort of, still a little bit small-ish town, it's a given some of the biggest town-wide dramas, spectacles, and news will revolve around, well, nothing at all. Such is the case of this particular tale, involving nothing more than a public piano. The concept of sidewalk pianos is not a new one. Many a small town, city, and all that lies between have already embarked on allowing such things to exist. They bring to those communities a little something extra, breathing just a little bit more magic and life into the streets.

With so many other important issues facing our town (like the overwhelming need to catch up on infrastructure projects particularly roads that haven't been properly maintained in over 40 years), as a taxpayer, it's disappointing to see something like this taking so much of our Town's time.

In general, the public response to the piano has been overwhelmingly positive. With so much of the community spirit of Orangeville disappearing into the history books the Founder's Day festival, etc. this is just the kind of thing we need to bring more personality back.

Obviously, there are kinks to work out. I don't believe anyone thinks that a piano should be left on the sidewalk without any plan on how to maintain it, keep its condition up, protect it, etc. But the constant back and forth of 'Yes it can stay' well, no it can't,' is getting to be a little intense.

Things like this have the potential to bring people together. Much like Pokemon Go succeeded in doing (despite the criticisms of many), these types of things connect strangers over a shared interest. Maybe it's for playing, maybe it's for listening. Regardless of how it's bringing people together, it weaves a thread, connecting the community on a deeper level.

Rather than tying up attempts at creativity and community in bureaucratic red tape, the response should be to find a way to move forward with it.

The moment we hit a point when governance becomes the rule over every single thing, we lose the opportunity for spontaneous connection, for art to leap into reality.

Art no matter which medium is often unplanned. It comes along with the whims of inspiration, and in that moment, there is an unexpected, wonderful beauty. Though yes, some things should definitely be planned out, receiving careful approval (like the art installations on utility boxes, or the wood carvings), there needs to be room for the kinds of random, incredible things, like putting a piano out on the street.

The opportunities are endless when it comes down to what this piano could become. Many communities with pianos installed have turned them into art projects, utilizing them as a canvas adding to the look of the downtown community. Just imagine what kind of wonderful, unique display could be created with this particular piano a piano set outside by the owner of a shop that literally focuses on art.

Most of the objections I've heard to this centre around either a) the 'noise' will be a nuisance or b) a piano is an eyesore. Is life to be so incredibly bland that music is considered a nuisance?

Truthfully, our community especially our main downtown core could use even more life to it. We have a plethora of incredible restaurants and cafes downtown, a street that received the title of Great[est] Street in Canada why wouldn't we want to expand on that in a way that doesn't drain further tax dollars?

Whether some residents would like to acknowledge it or not, there is no denying Orangeville is a community full of artists of all kinds. We have thriving writers, visual designers, photographers, artists, musicians all of us itching for a way to show off the amazing, incredible talent blossoming within our borders.

Just for a moment, let's bring it back to our taxes and economy. We all want to see our town do better, to make more money, to ease the burden on taxpayers. While some elected officials fight to make this a destination town, I have to sit back and ask how can it be one when our options are so limited to make it such a thing?

It's the unique, interesting things that draw people into the smaller communities. Arts communities thrive because there is always something to see and do without breaking the bank. While we already have many amazing, beautiful shops and boutiques on our main drag, for many people, even a single item in one of those shops would break the bank. That's not necessarily a bad thing they have their specific group of customers they aim for, and in those situations they thrive.

But the average person doesn't have \$100 bill-lined pockets. Those of us that are a little dry in the financial area will rarely drive to a place simply to window shop, even if the food there is worth it.

Seeing a community thrive with activities and interesting things, like a bright and colourful piano, art installations on utility boxes,

beautiful trails ? these are the kinds of things that make a day trip to a small, middle-of-nowhere town worth it. Despite some of the back and forth, it seems that, for now, the piano will stay. While it's here, let's take the opportunity to see it for what it could do ? how it could start a ripple effect, bringing more life, more music, and a little more magic to our small-ish, middle-of-nowhere home ? how it could be the very thing that helps us create a place to draw people in and see our little town thrive.